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The Role of the *Comes* Lucillianus during Julian's Persian Expedition

It is my purpose here to recover as full an account as possible of the role played by the *comes* Lucillianus¹ during the emperor Julian's Persian expedition in 363². The first we learn of Lucillianus is that he was an officer aboard the Roman fleet which arrived at Julian's camp on the bank of the Euphrates during his reception of several Saracen leaders on 28 March 363. Ammianus Marcellinus and Zosimus both record this event, although each with different detail. As far as we are here concerned, the most important distinction between their two accounts lies in the titles which they attribute to Lucillianus. While Zosimus gives the impression that Lucillianus and Constantianus were in joint command of the fleet, naval officers of the same rank apparently (ὁμότατοι), Ammianus reveals that they were each of different rank, that Constantianus was a tribune (*tribunus*), and Lucillianus a count (*comes*)³. Ammianus' account is the more credible for several reasons. Not only was he himself a member of Julian's expedition, with first hand knowledge of many of the events and personalities which he describes, but the term which Zosimus uses to describe both Lucillianus and Constantianus (ὁμότατος) was not a correct military title. It is a feature of Zosimus' style that he avoids technical Latin military terms, or transliterations thereof, and attempts to substitute classical Greek equivalents⁴. As in this case, the result is that important distinctions are often lost. The most important indication, however, that Lucillianus and Constantianus did not in fact share joint-command of the fleet, or anything else for that matter, is that they make no further appearance together in any of our surviving sources. Indeed, Constantianus fades from the historical record altogether. He may be identifiable as the future *tribunus stabuli* and brother-in-law of Valentinian I who was killed in 369⁵, which suggests that he survived the Persian expedition, but this remains uncertain. This contrasts starkly to the relative abundance of information concerning Lucillianus, as will become clear next.

There is explicit testimony concerning the activities of Lucillianus during the earlier part of the expedition as follows:

(1) during the march from Circesium to Zautha and thence to Dura-Europus, Julian arranged for a group of 1,500 scouts to precede the main body of his forces as a

¹ See *PLRE*, I, p. 517.

² In general on the Persian expedition, see J. MATTHEWS, *The Roman Empire of Ammianus*, London, 1989, p. 130-179.

³ *AMM.*, 23, 3, 9: *classis aduenit, tribuno Constantiano cum comite Luciliano ductante*...; *ZOS.*, *HN*, 3, 13, 2-3: κατέστησαν δὲ ναύαρχοι Δουκ[ι]ανὸς καὶ Κωνσταντ[ιν]ός.

⁴ In general, see F. PASCHOU, *Zosime. Histoire Nouvelle*, III, 2, *Livre VI et Index*, Paris, 1989, p. 201-212.

⁵ *AMM.*, 28, 2, 10. Their identification is assumed at *PLRE*, I, p. 221.

arrived under the command of the tribune Constantianus and count Lucilianus in the lead», edition J. FONTAINE, *Ammien Marcellin, Histoire IV, Livres XXIII-XXV, 1^{re} Partie*, Paris, 1977, p. 86, translates: «... sa flotte arriva, aussi grande que celle du tout-puissant roi Xerxès, sous le commandement du tribun Constantien et du comte Lucillien». M. CALTABIANO, *Ammiano Marcellino. Storie*, Milan, 1989, p. 505, translates similarly again: «... giunse la flotta simile a quella del famoso e potentissimo re Sesse, comandata dal tribuno Costanziano e dal comes Luciliano». I would translate: «... the fleet arrived with the tribune Constantianus and count Lucilianus in the lead».

preserve the name of the real commander of the fleet in his rather confused claim concerning the role of Hieraetus in the preparation of the same¹⁵.

This brings us to a final problem. What happened to Lucillianus? Other officers who do not seem to have had any more authority than he, went on to enjoy remarkably successful careers under Julian's successors, under Jovian first, then Valens¹⁶. In contrast, we hear no more of Lucillianus following the Persian expedition which suggests that his career came to a sudden end during the same. It seems scarcely credible that he retired voluntarily, and while we cannot exclude the possibility that he was killed in action, Ammianus and Zosimus seem quite informative concerning the deaths of those at the rank or tribune or above, so that this possibility seems greatly reduced¹⁷. In this manner, therefore, we are forced to consider a third possibility, that Lucillianus was cashiered in disgrace. Julian proved that he was not reluctant to discharge from his service those who were either unwilling or unable to perform as he required. For example, shortly after the Roman destruction of Prisabora, the Persians managed to ambush three units of cavalry scouting ahead of the main Roman force, killing one of their tribunes and capturing a standard¹⁸. According to Ammianus, Julian cashiered the two surviving tribunes and executed ten other soldiers. Again, shortly after he had begun his retreat towards Roman territory once more, Julian cashiered five further cavalry tribunes because of their premature retirement from the field, as he saw it anyway¹⁹. Indeed, we may even be able to identify the precise incident which saw Lucillianus meet a similar fate also.

Three different detailed accounts have survived of the crossing of the Tigris by Julian and his army at a site opposite the Persian capital of Ctesiphon. Ammianus, Zosimus, and Libanius all agree that Julian's plan for a frontal assault against the opposite river-bank met with opposition²⁰. This is hardly surprising. The target zone was a high, steep bank, surmounted by a wall from which Persians could rain down missiles on their attackers with relative impunity. The casualties would be high²¹.

¹⁵ Zos., *HN*, 3, 12, 1. See F. PASCHOU (supra n. 9), p. 104-105.

¹⁶ I refer in particular here to the tribune Mauritius (AMM., 25, 8, 7; Zos., *HN*, 3, 33, 1), probably identifiable as the *comes et dux Aegypti* of the same name by 375 (*PLRE*, 1, p. 570; also *P. Oxy.* 4381), and to the tribune Maurus who was promoted as *dux Phoenices* first (AMM., 25, 1, 2), then as a more senior *comes* by 378 (AMM., 31, 10, 21). See D. WOODS, *Maurus, Mavia and Ammianus*, in *Mnemosyne*, 51 (1998), forthcoming. It is difficult to determine the exact roles played by Victor (*PLRE*, 1, p. 957-959) and Arintheus (*PLRE*, 1, p. 102-103) during this expedition, but they appear to have been senior to Lucillianus. To be more precise, and as I will argue in more detail elsewhere, the *comes* Victor appears to have been second-in-command to the *magister pedum praesentalis* Nevitta, his *vicarius* for want of a better term, while Arintheus appears to have been the *magister equitum praesentalis*, with Hormisdas as his *vicarius*. Hence the chain of command ran upwards from Lucillianus to Victor to Nevitta.

¹⁷ Deaths are recorded as follows: Machameus (AMM., 25, 1, 2; Zos., *HN*, 3, 26, 5); Vetrano (AMM., 25, 1, 19; Zos., *HN*, 3, 28, 2); Anacotius and Phosphorius (AMM., 25, 3, 14; Zos., *HN*, 3, 29, 3); Julianus, Macrobius, and Maximus (AMM., 25, 6, 3; Zos., *HN*, 3, 30, 4).

¹⁸ AMM., 24, 3, 1; Zos., *HN*, 3, 19, 1-2.

¹⁹ AMM., 25, 1, 8-9.

²⁰ AMM., 24, 6, 5; Zos., *HN*, 3, 25, 2; LIBAN., *Or.*, 18.250.

²¹ Ammianus claims that the Romans suffered a total of only 70 casualties during the crossing of the Tigris and the battle which followed in contrast to the 2,500 casualties

Yet while Ammianus and Zosimus both depict his senior officers maintaining a common front against Julian in this matter, Libanius tells a slightly different story. According to him, the rest of the officers remained silent, while one man voiced his lone opposition to him, the emperor's plan. Not unnaturally, this was the officer expected to lead the assault, so Julian replaced him with another instead. There is no problem identifying this replacement, the *comes* Victor²². But whom did he replace? In order to answer this, we must ask who it was that had led similar assaults earlier? In so far as Lucillianus had led a similar assault on Anatha, and had been first across the canal before Prisabora also, he must be our prime suspect here. Hence his disappearance from the historical record. For while it is true that Libanius does not specifically state that the officer in question was actually discharged from the army, his actions were certainly open to misinterpretation, and as mentioned above, Julian was increasingly impatient of those whom he suspected of cowardice. That Lucillianus had judged the situation correctly probably did not help his case either. Ammianus and Zosimus both reveal that the first assault wave was pinned down at the foot of the opposite bank, and that their ships were set alight²³. Julian retrieved matters only by launching a second assault wave, that is, by committing many more men to the attack than he had originally intended. He emerged victorious, so, but more by good luck, and sheer force of numbers, than any display of ability on his part.

It is my argument, therefore, that Lucillianus was the *comes* in command of the *Laenclarii* and the *Martuarii*, and that he was dismissed from his service by Julian when he opposed his plan for a frontal assault across the Tigris. An unusual picture emerges of a good Roman officer concerned for the safety of his men. Lucillianus, we may surmise, had probably wanted to cross the river at some point further away, and attack the Persian defenders from behind, exactly as he had done earlier at the canal before Prisabora. But Julian was impatient of any delay, and Lucillianus suffered accordingly. Yet this was not the end of the matter. Julian began to encounter increasing opposition to his plans from his senior officers²⁴. Indeed, if the growing hostility between the two was not an important factor in the eventual decision to assassinate Julian, then it may help to explain at least why this rumour, that he had been assassinated by a Roman, should have gained the credence which it did²⁵.

A final point remains. While Lucillianus' role during the Persian expedition is of some interest in itself, it may also contribute to the controversy concerning the lost account of this expedition by Magnus of Carthage, and the extent to which our surviving sources depend on this text. One notes that one of the first men out of the

which they inflicted upon the Persians (AMM., 24, 6, 15), and Zosimus agrees with him here, claiming 2,500 Persian casualties also against only 75 Roman (*HN*, 3, 25, 7). I concur with those scholars who find the number of Roman casualties implausible at best, e.g. R. T. RUDLEY, *Notes on Julian's Persian Expedition* (363), in *Historia*, 22 (1973), p. 317-330.

²² As identified in the Loeb edition by A. F. NORMAN, *Libanius. Selected Works*, I, Cambridge Mass., 1987, p. 447.

²³ AMM., 24, 6, 5; Zos., *HN*, 3, 25, 2-4.

²⁴ On the opposition to Julian at the «council of Ctesiphon», see N. J. E. AUSTIN, *Julian at Ctesiphon: A Fresh Look at Ammianus' Account*, in *Athenaeum*, 50 (1972), p. 301-309. In general, see W. E. KAEGL, *Domestic Military Problems of Julian the Apostate*, in *Byzantinische Forschungen*, 2 (1967), p. 247-264.

²⁵ AMM., 25, 6, 5; GREG. NAZ., *Or.*, 5, 13; LIBAN., *Or.*, 18, 274, 24, 11.

Roman siege-tunnel into Maiozamalcha was a tribune named Magnus, and that he may be identifiable as the historian Magnus of Carthage²⁶. Bearing in mind that the three units who dug this tunnel were the *Lanciani*, the *Martiani*, and the *Victores*, then the Magnus who emerged from this tunnel was probably tribune of one of these three units, that is, there is a strong possibility that he served under the direct command of the *comes* Lucillianus²⁷. This may well explain the prominence of Lucillianus in the fragment of Magnus of Carthage's work as preserved by Malalas, that Magnus gave pride of place to Lucillianus in his history because Lucillianus had been his immediate commanding officer with whose activities he was most familiar. A next point to consider is the prominence afforded Lucillianus, and the actions in which he was engaged, by Zosimus in his history, in contrast to Ammianus' relative neglect of the same. Why do these authors treat the same individual so differently? One possibility is that Zosimus has been influenced by Magnus of Carthage's account of events. This is not to claim that Zosimus was directly acquainted with Magnus' work, since it seems probable that he did little more than summarise the work of the late fourth-century historian Eunapius of Sardis. Yet Eunapius may have used Magnus as one of his sources, and this would explain how Magnus' view of events came to feature so prominently even in Zosimus' history. To summarize, therefore, we are unusually well informed about Lucillianus, and the engagements in which he participated, because a key source for the Persian expedition was written by one of his junior officers, the tribune Magnus of Carthage, who participated himself in these engagements, and was able to provide detailed accounts of the same for this reason.

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²⁶ See C.W. FORNARA, *Julian's Persian Expedition in Ammianus and Zosimus*, in *JHS*, 111 (1991), p. 1-15, esp. 14-15.

²⁷ If so, then we should probably identify the two tribunes of the *Lanciani* and *Martiani* under Lucillianus as Magnus and Constantianus, although it seems impossible to distinguish at present which unit it was that each tribune actually commanded.